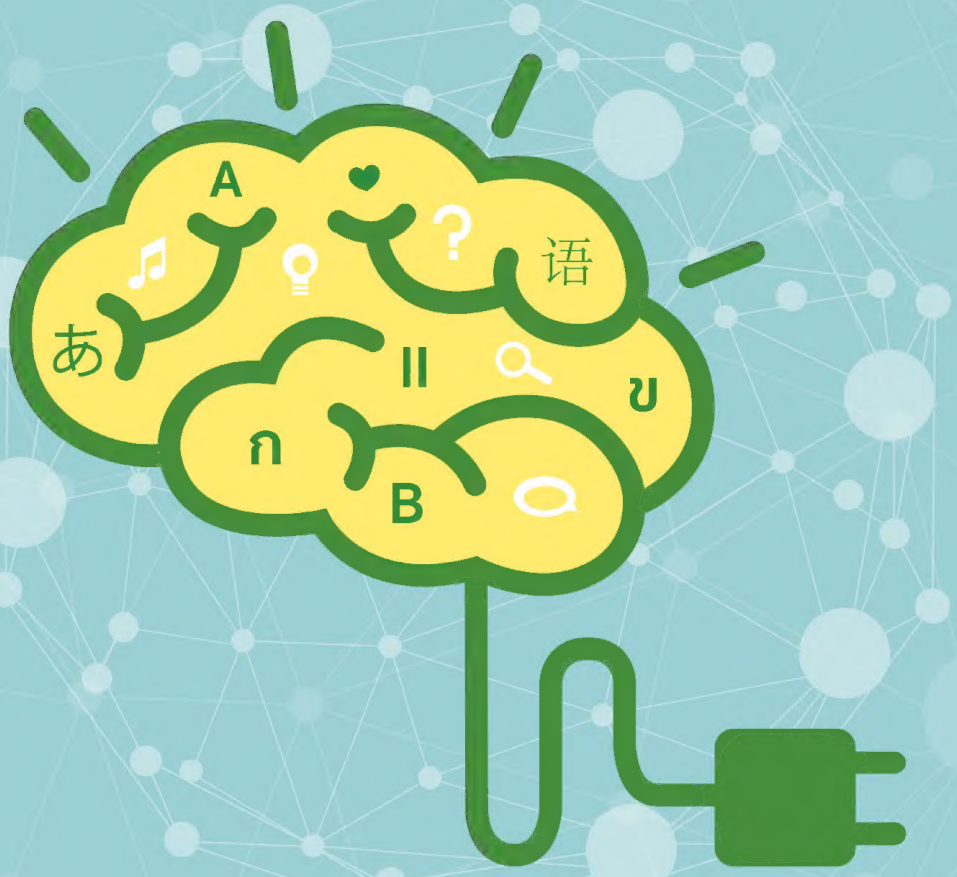
ICAA 2019

The 2nd International Conference on Applied Liberal Arts
Liberal Arts for Interdisciplinary Practice and Research

May 24 , 2019
King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang,
Bangkok, Thailand



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Metacognitive Awareness in Reading English Language Text: A Perspective from the EFL Undergraduate Students in Thailand

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Abstract

Recent research on reading achievement in English asserts that metacognitive awareness is important driving forces for learning. This study sought to examine the metacognitive strategies and perceive use of reading strategies of one hundred thirty-four student-teachers majoring in English language in one public university in Thailand while reading Academic Texts for Teachers (ATT). The methods used to collect the data were modified questionnaire and focus group discussions. In the questionnaire data, finding shows that students had different metacognitive strategies in reading English language text; particularly most of the respondents demonstrated the frequent used of Global Reading Strategies (GRS) against Problem Solve Strategies (PSS). Some issues and challenges that they noted included unfamiliarity of words in the text, lack of phonemic awareness, lack of linguistic awareness, and anxiety towards classmates and teachers. The interpretation of these findings, their implications for English teaching and learning, and future lines of research are discussed.

Keywords: metacognitive strategies; reading; perception; text

1. Background of the study

Reading is a complex process including a combination of psycholinguistic, cognitive, and perceptual abilities in understanding every single word in the text (Warmington & Hulme, 2012; Apel et al., 2013). It is widely accepted that the three key themes of reading are fluency (involves time or speed), comprehension (conceptual interaction), and accuracy (involves phonological and orthographic processing). Paris and colleagues (2016) in their handbook about the development of Strategic Readers,

highlight that expert readers use rapid decoding a large vocabularies in the text, however, novice reader focus only on decoding single words resulting to failure in reading for different texts or purposes. This may deliver to the fact that reading is a continuous process of gaining input from the text. In this process, novice reader constantly from hypotheses, test predictions and uses their knowledge of vocabulary and language to construct meaning base on the text or materials they read. However, it is not merely reading and decoding words from the text, rather a multi task, where learners need to understand and comprehend of they are reading. Carretti and De Beni (2006) argued that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive ability requiring the capacity to integrate text information with the knowledge of the reader had and this follows by construction and elaboration of a mental representation. Thus, reading comprehension is an interactive process that takes place between a reader and a text (Rumelhart, 1994); during this interaction, the reader brings variable levels of experiences and skills which include language skills, cognitive resources and world knowledge.

Despite the consensus on the significance of metacognitive awareness in reading skill, there are limited studies on this issue and the studies, investigating metacognitive awareness with different population at different proficiency levels, particularly in EFL classroom (English as foreign language), where English in not medium of instruction. Considering this need, the present paper was designed to investigate the university students majoring English language's metacognitive awareness of reading strategies they use while reading academic texts, particularly teachers' academic texts. (E.g. teaching principles, pedagogy). Through this study, it was attempted to gain more insights about how readers use their resources for cognitive awareness in reading. With the findings of this study, it is hoped that other teachers, scholars, and researchers could further study on the learner's awareness of the reading process.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reader's Metacognitive Awareness

Earlier work in reading research in L1 and L2 metacognitive awareness of every individual's cognitive ability and motivational process while reading academic text has received considerable interest (see Alhaqbani & Riazi, 2012; Ahmadi et al., 2013; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012; Takallou, 2011). Takallou (2011) reading strategies and metacognitive awareness can "reveal about the way readers manage their interactions with written text".... " how these strategies are related to reading comprehension" (p. 246), which entails " knowledge of strategies for processing texts, the ability to monitor comprehension and the ability to adjust strategies as needed"(Auerbach & Paxton, 1997: 240-241). It is thought that such monitoring, evaluation, and awareness processes are often referred as metacognition. A considerable amount of literature has been published

on metacognition. These studies have been using different terms or words such as metacognitive genre (Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011), metacognitive system (Zhang,2010), metacognitive instruction (Wichadee, 2011), metacognitive awareness (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012), and metacognitive strategies (Karbalaei, 2010). More recent attention has focused on the provision of the use of reading strategies from reading to academic reading. It has been commonly assumed that academic reading requires critical thinking and deep understanding towards the text. Aghaie and Zhang (2012), for instance, explored the impact of explicit teaching of reading strategies on English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students' reading performance in Iran. Findings revealed that Iranian learners showed that strategy instruction contributed to autonomous reading behaviors. In the same vein, Karbalaei (2010), investigated whether there are any significant differences between EFL and ESL readers (96 Iranians and 93 Indians) in metacognitive reading strategies when they are reading academic texts in English. The result of this study indicated that the subjects in both groups reported a similar pattern of strategy awareness while reading academic texts although the two student groups had been schooled in significantly different socio-cultural environments. In brief, much of the research about metacognition in L2 reading strategies highlighted that learner (reader) metacognitive awareness are related positively to their success in L2 reading comprehension and performance and that both reading proficiency and L2 overall proficiency are connected to readers (see Nash-Ditzel, 2010; Ahmadi et al., 2013; Pressley et al., 2013). Together, these studies outline that more proficient readers tend to have better ability of their metacognitive system than poor readers (Lai, 20122). Thus, it is crucial for L2 readers to be aware of how they employ planning, regulating, monitoring, evaluating during their reading process. Considering this significance of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies for reading performance the present study was designed to determine the Thai undergraduate students majoring in English language metacognitive awareness of Academic Texts for Teachers (ATT). Firstly it was attempted to define the participants reading strategies used in academic reading and to determine the frequency of these strategy use so that the student's profile of metacognitive awareness of these reading strategies could be described. The research question addressing this aim is;

1. What is Thai EFL students' metacognitive awareness of Academic Texts for Teachers (ATT) reading strategies?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 134 Thai student-teachers majoring in English language. All participants were ages to 15-24, Thai as their mother language, and English as foreign language. The participant students have had compulsory English for teacher's

courses, and they have been trained on effective reading strategies during their university education, as they are required to read conceptual and theoretical related to teaching.

3.2. Instruments

In the study, in order to determine the participants metacognitive awareness of reading strategies used in Academic Texts for Teachers (ATT), the survey of reading strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). ATT was selected for this study mainly because the participants are often required to read books or articles related to teacher education courses. The SORS was validated (Cronbach's alpha=0,93), indicating reasonably dependable measure of students' metacognitive awareness. It consists of 30 items, each of which uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("never do this") to 5 ("I always do this"). Students are asked to read each statement and click the number that applied to them, indicating the frequency with which they use the reading strategy in the statement. The questionnaire was floated using Google form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SvKJNqjNOkBkeLp-WmnbF8YCPF35BELq32qUaIWB-bE/edit?usp=drive_web) to prevent any cause and delays during the study. Thus, it is considered that the higher the number is, the more frequent the perceived use of the strategy becomes. In the survey questionnaire, there are three categories being measured such as, global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support strategies. These categories correspond with different items, namely, 14 items for global reading strategies (GRS), problem-solving strategies (PROB) with 7 items, and support strategies (SUP) compose of 9 items.

3.3. Data Analysis

In data analysis, SPSS 15.0 was used to apply descriptive statistical procedures. The mean values, standard deviation values and percentages were obtained to discuss overall use of reading strategy, and use of each strategy category, lastly, the most frequent and least frequent strategies

4. Result(s)

To interpret the results, the range intervals indicating the frequency of strategy use from Always to Never were calculated for the data collection instrument (SORS).

Table 1 Over all use of reading strategies

	Items	Mean	Description
GLOB	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read	3.44	I sometimes do this
SUP	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read	2.39	I do this only occasionally'
GLOB	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read	3.13	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it	3.29	I sometimes do this'
SUP	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	3.29	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose	3.60	I usually do this
PROB	7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading	2.99	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	3.43	I sometimes do this'
PROB	9. L try to get back on track when I lose concentration	3.8	I usually do this
SUP	10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	3.20	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	3.25	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore	3.67	I usually do this
SUP	13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	3.30	I sometimes do this'
PROB	14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what | am reading	3.37	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding	3.26	I sometimes do this'

PROB	16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading	3.44	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading	3.33	I sometimes do this'
SUP	18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	3.52	I usually do this
PROB	19. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read	3.31	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	20. l use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information	3.17	I sometimes do this'
GLOB	21. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.24	I sometimes do this'
SUP	22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it	3.60	I usually do this
GLOB	23. I check my understanding when I come across new information	3.60	I usually do this
GLOB	24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read	3.61	I usually do this
PROB	25. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding	3.72	I usually do this
SUP	26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	3.32	I usually do this
GLOB	27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.5	I usually do this
PROB	28. When read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases	3.5	I usually do this
SUP	29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language	3.62	I usually do this
SUP	30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	3.51	I usually do this

The table 1 presents the categories of each strategies, global reading category, for instance, learners perceived that they are sometime reading academic text purposively (M=3.44). As can be seen from the table above, participants think about what they know to help them understand what they are reading (M=3.13). Hence,

before reading the text, the participants reported that they sometimes do in taking an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it (M= 3.29), while in this process, they usually think about whether the content of the text fits they reading purpose (M=3.60). They also reported that they sometimes review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization (M=3.43). When reading, they usually decide what to read closely and what to ignore (M=3.67). In terms of understanding, participants sometime use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase their understanding (M=3.26), sometimes use context clues to help them better understand what they are reading (M=3.33), use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information (M= 3.17), critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text (M=3.24). At the end of the reading stage, participants usually check to see if their guesses about the text are right or wrong (M=3.5).

While in problem solving strategy, it is apparent from this table 1 that participants sometime read slowly and carefully to make sure they understand what they are reading. However, they reported that they usually try to get back on track when they lose concentration (M=3.8). The findings also show that participants sometimes pay closer attention to what they are reading when the text becomes difficult (M=3.37). This is evident to their answer that they sometime try to picture or visualize information to help them remember what they read (M= 3.31). Hence, they reported that they usually re-read the text to increase their understanding if the text is difficult (M= 72). Furthermore, they also reported that they usually do guessing the meaning of unknown words and phrase (M=3.5).

Table 2 Categories of reading strategies

Item	Mean	Description
Global reading	3	I sometimes do this
problem-solving strategies	3	I sometimes do this
support strategies	2	I do this only occasionally

Table 2 presents the result obtained from the SORS, it was noted Global reading and problem-solving strategies are tied in the survey. Both categories gained [M=3, sometimes do], which means that learners are either using this strategy or not.

As it shows from the table 2, support strategy in reading academic text is less significant compare to the two categories. Findings also shows that they take notes while reading to help them understand what they are reading occasionally (M=29). They also reported that they sometime they read aloud to help them understand what they read when text becomes difficult (M-29), underline or circle information in the text to help them remember it (M=3.20). However, the table shows that participants usually go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it (M=3.60), ask themselves

questions they like to have answered in the text (m=3.32), and translate from English into their native language (M=3.62).

Finally, the data shows that global reading and problem-solving strategies were the frequent strategy employed by the learners. This may explain that ATT is quite theoretical in nature, so learners may utilize these two strategies to understand the context of the text. In contrary to support strategies, it was revealed in the data that learners do this strategy occasionally. This may inform us that some ATT in teacher education is quite difficult to understand, whereas participants need support to understand the content of the text.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study was designed to determine Thai EFL University students majoring in English language metacognitive awareness of reading strategies applied during Academic Texts for Teachers (ATT) reading. The results indicated that they usually employed Global reading (M=3) and problem-solving strategies (M=3). A possible explanation for this might be that the participants in this study are all English major students; where there are huge of reading materials that they have to read such as phonology, syntax, and language acquisition, among others. These results were consistent to the study of Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), whey they study the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies of students on Oklahoman. Findings revealed that the three readings strategies were significant in each other. Furthermore, the findings indicating predominant use of problem-solving strategies in the present study was consistent with Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) and Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) that problem-solving strategies were mostly used by non-native readers since these strategies were critical for comprehension. Particularly, the strategies like “rereading for better understanding”, “adjusting reading rate” and “paying close attention to reading” were some of the strategies that the participants mostly preferred to use when they encountered any comprehension problems during academic reading. The interpretation of these findings, their implications for English teaching and learning, and future lines of research are discussed.

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